United Nations E/2017/NGO/10

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
2 June 2017

Original: English

2017 session
28 July 2016-27 July 2017
Agenda item 5
High-level segment

Statement submitted by IOGT International, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

17-09360 (E) 080617

Please recycle

Statement

IOGT International thanks the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) for the opportunity to provide a written statement for the 2017 High-Level Segment.

Drawing on 165 years of experience promoting Human Rights, democracy and development in communities worldwide and representing 140 member organizations from 57 countries, IOGT International is the premier global network for community-based interventions and evidence-based policies to prevent and reduce harm caused by alcohol and other drugs.

We are committed to creating environments in which everyone is empowered to live up to their fullest potential and our work seeks to promote human and planetary health along with active citizenship.

The 2030 Agenda is a remarkable achievement. But envisioning its realization through the lens of the most deprived, marginalized and vulnerable populations on our planet, we clearly see massive obstacles for the successful implementation of the SDGs.

The evidence is unmistakable: Harmful use of alcohol is a cross-cutting obstacle for achieving the SDGs, as it adversely impacts 12 out of 17 goals.

For instance: Pervasive alcohol harm causes poverty, ill-health and premature deaths, erodes economic productivity, threatens women's empowerment and gender equality, puts the development of our children and youth into peril, contributes to unsafe public spaces and jeopardizes water and food security.

- Alcohol kills 3.3 million people worldwide every year. This represents 5.9% of all deaths.
- Alcohol consumption causes death and disability relatively early in life. In the age group 20 to 39 years approximately 25% of total deaths are alcohol-attributable.
- Alcohol is the leading risk factor for death and disability among people aged 15 to 49 years worldwide. This is the age range in which people are typically at their most productive economically.
- There's a causal relationship between alcohol and mental health disorders, infectious diseases like tuberculosis (TB) and HIV/AIDS and non-communicable diseases like cancer and heart disease.

In light of this reality and in the context of the 2017 theme of the Economic and Social's Council High-Level Segment, IOGT International calls on governments and the United Nations system to take bold steps in tackling the adverse role of alcohol as a crosscutting impediment for 12 of 17 SDGs. Simply put: alcohol harm is a Human Rights and sustainable development issue. Harmful use of alcohol is a threat to our shared goal of eradicating poverty in all its forms.

Evidence-based, high-impact and cost-effective policy measures do exist that prevent and reduce alcohol harm and its burden on sustainable human development.

The so-called Three Best Buys of alcohol policy as described by World Bank, World Health Organization and World Economic Forum (among others), can help foster transformative change in our efforts to eradicate poverty and promote sustainable development.

Alcohol policy measures such as alcohol taxation, advertising bans and availability regulations should play a solid role in the global, regional, national and local efforts to achieve the SDGs.

We have the evidence. We have the policy tools. Now we need political will and leadership to take bold action for the benefit of the most deprived and vulnerable.